

Have I Told You Lately ... that I love you ...

I'm leaning back in the dentist's chair. The hygienist, fresh faced and blue-eyed, is cleaning my teeth. I wear a pair of plastic glasses to shield my eyes from errant tartar shards. I see the ceiling tiles, innocuous in color and shape. Large fluorescent panels flood the room with light. The gentle hygienist is nothing but kind, asking questions about Bob (whom they knew well at this practice and who was a favorite). While my mouth gapes and instruments scrape she makes tender comments in her soothing voice, asking me about how I am, telling me how much they enjoyed Bob. "How long has it been now, since he died?" I murmur muffled responses or nod discreetly. I am telling myself not to let tears form behind that plastic shield. I am telling myself to distance myself from his face, my emotions, the reality that he doesn't live on this earth anymore, doesn't need his teeth cleaned, nor to chat up the staff, nor to tell me how nice they all are at Amber Dental when he gets home.

I've got it covered. I'm back in control. I'm thinking about my day, my clients, the fact that the sun, behind the closed louvered shutters, is actually shining this early February morning. Inconsequential pop music plays in the background. And then I hear some familiar chords, an intro that resonates and these words: *Have I told you lately that I love you? Have I told you there's no one else above you...? You fill my heart with gladness, take away all my sadness, ease my troubles, that's what you do...*

It's the Van Morrison classic sung by Rod Stewart, gravely voice and all—a favorite, poignant to the point of heartbreak.

Those words. I was blessed to live with someone for almost my whole life who literally *could* take away my sadness and fill my heart with gladness. I lived with someone who could turn a phrase, make an art form out of humor, lay on a point of perspective that often brightened or shifted or ameliorated my world. So I close my eyes behind the plastic shields, breathe deeply in the dentist's chair, endure the abrasive chipping away of tartared teeth and listen. I pray that tears will not eke from under plastic, role down cheeks, splash the protective bib. *There's a love that's divine, and it's yours and it's mine... like the sun...and at the end of the day, we should give thanks and pray to the One, to the One...*

Later I step out into cold air and gleaming sun. I am heartened. I am grateful. I feel energy coursing through my body. I pass my tongue over shiny teeth. The sky above is winter-blue. I look to the heavens and thank the One who gave me a True Love. 🍃